

# When The Going Gets Tough. Return to ALIVENESS

## How do you renew and refresh yourself?

For most people, teaching is a combination of exhaustion, boredom, and frustration on the one hand, and exhilaration, joyfulness and satisfaction on the other. But the more forgotten face is that it is possible to experience more joy and less dissatisfaction. The secret does not lie in the job, but in us. We have the capacity to experience teaching as satisfying if we so choose. It is a matter of learning to get excited and stay that way and how to renew, refresh, and invigorate your-self.

## Has Teaching got to be a Burn-out profession?

A teacher's job is certainly less physically challenging than some other jobs. So what causes the exhaustion?

What's exhausting is constantly trying to control discipline, suppressing student's classroom behaviour, or teaching the same thing, day after day. What's tiring is fighting with peers, the administration or other members of the staff. Not improving personally in one's profession is tiring-it keeps you in a rut. Boredom is tiring. Talking non-supportively about other teachers, students or yourself is also exhausting.

## What does not exhaust

Inspiring others is not exhausting. Sharing love is not tiring. Correcting brilliant homework or tests is not exhausting. Communication openly is not exhausting. Enjoying your work and creating excellence is not exhausting. Having students call you or send appreciative letters is not tiring. Getting standing ovations is not tiring. Planning new and exciting classes is not exhausting and getting great feedback or changing lives is certainly revitalizing.

**The bottom line is that if you are worn out constantly or lack inspiration, you've got to make some changes within yourself or change profession. Both you and your students deserve much better.**

Experts say there are three things which help one to experience aliveness and joyfulness in one's work: viz. a vision, so you see yourself as part of a larger plan; a path so that you can move towards realizing this plan, and an area of expertise that empowers your vision and path.

### 1. Develop a Compelling Vision and Grand Purpose

A study of persons known to be satisfied in their jobs indicated one factor common to all of them, viz. a mission, purpose or chief aim in life. As a teacher, you have a choice. You can teach every day for a paycheck and be part of a mediocre group. Or, you can live your life for something larger, more grand and more important. The real joy in life, at any job, is that of being used for a mighty purpose.

Is it possible to live on life with a sense of a grand mission? Education provides several areas for such dedication. May be you want to help to improve the quality of education in your school. Maybe you want to bring about an improved evaluation system in the school. May be you want to give some special care for weak students. Or maybe you want to make learning fun.

What dream could you have that is so big, that it becomes a lifetime job? A job that you could not finish because it would always expanding.

### **Build Temples instead of Cutting stones**

Two stonecutters were at work and were asked what they were doing. In a complaining voice one said, "I'm cutting stones." The other beamed and said, "I'm building a temple." Same job. One feels part of a grand purpose, another does not. A vision without tasks is a pipedream. A task without vision is drudgery.

When you have decided on you dream commit yourself to it. To commit to your dream is to say to yourself, "I will do whatever it takes to make it happen." And, usually, your commitment will require risking the status quo. It will involve doing even unpleasant activities as well as the sacrifice of some momentary personal comfort.

**Education is what remains when what has been learnt has been forgotten. Contributed by Ms. S. Krishnan, Calcutta**

## **2. Develop a Path and a Sense of Journey**

Once you have discovered your vision, it is a question of getting on to achieving it little by little. This will usually call for professional and personal development in the skills to be more effective. Using libraries, speaking with well-motivated colleagues, and exposing oneself to audio-visual materials are only some of the ways of developing in one's profession. A very effective way to develop oneself is to study master teachers. We usually see certain teachers from our own school or others, succeeding in things we find difficult. It is useful to ask ourselves,-and maybe even him/her, "How does s/he do it?" And, "In what way do I need to change my ways?"

No matter how good our vision is, it is going to take time. Looking at it as a journey is going to help. My teaching career is going to help. My teaching career is going to be a journey. Each day builds o yesterday, and it is going to make a difference to tomorrow. Thus successes and failures each make their own contribution each day, and help us to keep on going with our vision.

### **3. Develop an area of expertise**

It is possible for everyone to develop a certain expertise in some given area however small. It will be a unique contribution that we ourselves make. There are several teachers who put in extra time to help weaker students. Others take a special care to help our students with problem families. Similarly many others do many other 'extra' bits. In course of time, these people develop insights and methods which are unique in dealing with such students. This would be their contribution, and that contribution would have an expertise quiet unlike others. To help you in this, do the following:

- Decide on a specialty
- Decide the best way to learn all that we can about it.
- Make a commitment to yourself that you will learn and fix a sort of time limit.
- Take the risks daily. Try the different, the unusual. Follow through on the commitment and make corrections if necessary.

### **Swami Vivekananda**

**Mrs. S. Mahajan has sent in the following from Swami Vivekananda: "Do not make all life a field of your exploitation. You may get ahead of others by it but the net results are bound to be shallow and misery. Give the other fellow a kindly thought once in a while and your heart is filled with joy and happiness."**

### **Tips for professional satisfaction as a teacher**

Rev. Peter Lourdes, consulting psychologist, and an expert in mind-body integration training of professional suggests the following for teachers.

1. some regular exercise, sport or relaxation
2. Regularly keeping in touch with your profession by reading, seminars, etc. The late Avihn D,Souza, Inspector of Anglo-Indian schools in West Bengal, was shocked at the little professional reading Principals and teachers do. "If I don't read a serious book for an hour a day", he said once, "I feel a prick of conscience".